

MAO TSE-TUNG

THE QUESTION OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATION



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First Edition February 1956

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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The Question of Agricultural Co-operation is a report delivered at a meeting of secretaries of provincial, municipal and autonomous region committees of the Communist Party of China on July 31, 1955. It has been made from the Chinese edition published in Peking in October 1955.

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No, this is not the right way at all. It is wrong. The tide of social reform in the countryside—in the shape of co-operation—has already reached some places. Soon it will sweep the whole country. This is a huge socialist revolutionary movement, which involves a rural population more than five hundred million strong, one which has very great world significance. We should guide this movement vigorously, warmly and systematically, and not act as a drag on it in various ways. In such a movement some deviations are inevitable. That stands to reason, but it is not difficult to straighten them out. Weaknesses

Throughout the Chinese countryside a new upsurge in the socialist mass movement is in sight. But some of our comrades are tottering along like a woman with bound feet, always complaining that others are going too fast. They imagine that by picking on trifles, grumbling unnecessarily, worrying continuously and putting up countless taboos and commandments they are guiding the socialist mass movement in the rural areas on sound lines.

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or mistakes found among cadres and peasants can be done away with if we actively assist them. Guided by the Party the cadres and peasants are going forward; the movement is fundamentally healthy.

In some places they have made certain mistakes in the work, for example, barring poor peasants from the co-operatives and ignoring their difficulties, and at the same time forcing the well-to-do middle peasants into the co-operatives and interfering with their interests. But these errors have to be corrected by education, not just by reprimands. Mere reprimands solve no problems. We must guide the movement boldly, not act like one fearing the dragon in front and the tiger behind. Both cadres and peasants will change of themselves as they learn from their own experience in the struggle. Get them into action themselves: they will learn while doing, become more capable, and large numbers of excellent people will come forward. This "fearing the dragon in front and the tiger behind" attitude will not produce cadres. It is necessary to send large groups of cadres with short-term training into the countryside to guide and assist the agricultural co-operative movement; but the cadres sent down from above also have to learn how to work from the movement itself. Going in for training courses and hearing dozens of rules explained in lectures does not necessarily mean one knows how to work.

In short, leadership should never lag behind the mass movement. As things stand today, however,

the mass movement is in advance of the leadership, which fails to keep pace with the movement. This state of affairs must be changed.

II

Now, at a time when the nation-wide co-operative movement is taking tremendous strides forward, we still have to argue such questions as: Can the co-operatives grow? Can they be consolidated? As far as some comrades are concerned, the crux of the matter seems to be that they are worried about whether the several hundred thousand existing semi-socialist co-operatives—mostly rather small, averaging twenty odd peasant households each—can be consolidated. Of course, unless they are, growth is out of the question. Some comrades are still unconvinced by the history of the growth of co-operation in the past few years and are still waiting to see how things go in 1955. They may even wait another year, till 1956, and only if still more co-operatives are firmly established by then will they be truly convinced that agricultural co-operation is a possibility and that the policy of the Central Committee of our Party is correct. That is why the work this year and next is so very important.

To show the possibilities of agricultural co-operation, to show that the policy of the Central Com-

mittee of our Party on agricultural co-operation is sound, it is perhaps not without value for us to discuss here the history of the agricultural co-operative movement in our country.

Even before the founding of the People's Republic of China, in the course of twenty-two years of revolutionary wars, our Party amassed experience, after land reform, in guiding the peasants to organize agricultural producers' mutual-aid groups of a rudimentary socialist character. At that time, there were mutual-aid working groups and ploughing teams in Kiangsi Province, work exchange teams in northern Shensi and mutual-aid teams in various places in north, east and north-east China. In isolated cases, agricultural producers' co-operatives of a semi-socialist or socialist character also came into being. During the war of resistance to Japanese aggression, for instance, there was an agricultural producers' co-operative of a socialist character in Ansai County in northern Shensi, but at that time such co-operatives were not recommended.

Only since the founding of the Chinese People's Republic has our Party led the peasants to organize agricultural producers' mutual-aid teams on a more extensive scale and begun organizing agricultural producers' co-operatives, based on the mutual-aid teams, in large numbers—that is, for about six years now.

On December 15, 1951, when the Central Committee of our Party issued to local Party organizations

the first draft decisions on mutual-aid and co-operation in agricultural production to be tried out in various places, there were over three hundred agricultural producers' co-operatives. (This document was not published in the press in the form of Party decisions till March 1953.) Two years later, on December 16, 1953, our Party Central Committee issued its decisions on agricultural producers' co-operatives. By then the number of agricultural producers' co-operatives exceeded 14,000, forty-seven times as many as two years before.

That decision laid it down that, between the winter of 1953 and the autumn harvest of 1954, the number of agricultural producers' co-operatives would increase from this 14,000 odd to 35,800 odd, that is, only to two and a half times as many. But, as it turned out, during that year the number of co-operatives rose to 100,000, more than seven times as many.

In October 1954 the Central Committee of our Party took a decision to increase the number of co-operatives sixfold, from one hundred thousand to six hundred thousand. The result was 670,000 co-operatives. By June 1955, after preliminary weeding-out, the number was cut by twenty thousand, leaving 650,000—fifty thousand more than the planned target. The number of peasant households in co-operatives was 16,900,000—an average of twenty-six households to each.

These co-operatives are mainly in those northern provinces which were the first to be liberated. In most of the provinces liberated later, a number of agricultural producers' co-operatives have been set up. There are a fair number in Anhwei and Chekiang, but not very many in other provinces.

These co-operatives, generally speaking, are small, but among them are a few large ones, some embracing seventy or eighty households, some more than a hundred, and some whose membership runs into several hundred households.

Generally, too, the co-operatives are semi-socialist, but a few have passed into a higher stage and become socialist co-operatives.

While the co-operative movement in agricultural production among the peasants has been growing our country has already established a small number of socialist state farms. By 1957 there will be 3,038 state farms cultivating 16,870,000 *mou*¹ of land. They will include 141 mechanized farms (those existing in 1952 plus those set up in the course of the First Five-Year Plan) with 7,580,000 *mou* under cultivation. The number of non-mechanized state farms under local jurisdiction will be 2,897, with 9,290,000 *mou* under cultivation. During the period covered by the Second and Third Five-Year Plans there will be a great growth of state-operated agriculture.

¹A *mou* is one sixth of an acre.—Translator.

In the spring of 1955 the Central Committee of our Party decided that the number of agricultural producers' co-operatives should go up to a million. This means a little more than a 50 per cent increase—adding 350,000 to the original 650,000. Now I feel this increase is a bit too small. Possibly the former figure of 650,000 should have been roughly doubled, i.e., the number of co-operatives ought to be increased to 1,300,000 so that in each of the country's 200,000 odd *hsiang*¹ except in some border areas, there might be at least one or several small agricultural producers' co-operatives of the semi-socialist type which would serve as an example for others. These new co-operatives would gain experience and in a year or two become "veterans," and others could learn from them. From now to the autumn harvest of October 1956 is fourteen months, and such a plan for the establishment of co-operatives ought to be feasible. I hope the responsible comrades in the various provinces and autonomous regions will go back and look into the question, work out a programme suited to actual conditions and report to the Central Committee within two months. We shall then hold a discussion and take a final decision.

The question is whether the co-operatives can be consolidated. Some people say that last year's plan to set up 500,000 was too big, too rash, and that this

¹*Hsiang* is an administrative unit of one or several villages.—*Translator*.

year's plan to set up 350,000 is too big, too rash, too. They doubt if that many co-operatives can be consolidated.

Is it really possible to consolidate them?

Needless to say, neither socialist industrialization nor socialist transformation is easy. A host of difficulties are bound to crop up as some 110 million peasant households turn from individual to collective management and go ahead with technical reforms in agriculture. But we should have confidence that our Party is capable of leading the masses to overcome such difficulties.

As far as agricultural co-operation is concerned, I think we should believe: first, that the poor peasants, and the lower middle peasants among both the new and old middle peasants,¹ are disposed to choose the socialist road and energetically respond to our Party's call for co-operation—the poor peasants because of their economic difficulties and the lower middle peasants because their economic conditions, though better than before liberation, are still not too good. Particularly active are those among them who have a deeper understanding.

Secondly, I think we should have confidence that our Party is capable of leading the people of the coun-

¹Old middle peasants are those who were middle peasants before the land reform. New middle peasants are those who have risen to the status of middle peasants since land reform.—*Translator.*

try to socialism. Our Party has led a great people's democratic revolution to victory and established a people's democratic dictatorship headed by the working class, and it can certainly lead our people to carry out, in the main, socialist industrialization and the socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce, in the course of roughly three five-year plans. In agriculture, as in other fields, we have powerful and convincing proof of this—witness the first group of 300 co-operatives, the second of 13,700 and the third of 86,000—100,000 all told—all of which were established before the autumn of 1954 and all of which have been consolidated. Why, then, should not the fourth group of 550,000 co-operatives formed in 1954-55 and the fifth group of 350,000 (our provisional target) to be established in 1955-56 be consolidated too?

We must believe in the masses; we must believe in our Party: these are two cardinal principles. If we doubt these principles, we can do nothing.

III

To gradually achieve agricultural co-operation throughout China's rural areas, we must seriously give the existing co-operatives a check over.

Great emphasis must be placed on the quality of the co-operatives. We must oppose any tendency to

neglect quality and concentrate solely on increasing their number or bringing a greater number of peasant households into them. That is why attention must be paid to checking over the co-operatives.

Co-operatives should be checked over not once, but two or three times a year. A certain number were checked over in the first half of this year (though in some places, apparently, this was done rather superficially, without taking enough trouble). I suggest a second checking in the autumn or winter of this year and a third in the spring or summer of next. Of the 650,000 existing co-operatives, 550,000 are new, set up last winter or this spring, and among these there are some "Class I" co-operatives, as they are called, which are pretty well consolidated. Adding the 100,000 old co-operatives already consolidated, the number already consolidated is not at all small. Cannot these co-operatives already consolidated gradually lead the others to consolidate? They certainly can.

We should treasure, not hinder, every bit of socialist initiative shown by peasants and cadres. It is our job to live with, breathe the same air as the members and cadres of the co-operatives and the county, district and *hsiang* cadres, not hamper their initiative.

Only where all, or nearly all the members of a co-operative have made up their minds not to carry on should a decision be taken to wind it up. If only some members have made up their minds not to carry on, they should be allowed to withdraw, while the

majority continue. If the majority are determined not to carry on but a minority are willing, then let the majority withdraw and the minority continue. Even so, it is better than to wind it up. In one very small co-operative of only six households in Hopei Province, the three old middle-peasant households firmly refused to carry on and left. The three poor-peasant households decided to continue at all costs, stayed in, and the co-operative organization was preserved. The fact is, the road taken by these three poor-peasant households is the one which will be taken by five hundred million peasants throughout the country. All peasants working on their own will eventually take the road resolutely chosen by these three poor-peasant households.

With the adoption of a policy of what was called "drastic compression" in Chekiang Province—not by decision of the Chekiang Provincial Party Committee—out of 53,000 co-operatives in the province 15,000, comprising 400,000 peasant households, were dissolved at one fell swoop. This caused great dissatisfaction among the masses and the cadres, and it was altogether the wrong thing to do. A "drastic compression" policy of this kind was decided on in a state of terrified confusion. It was not right, too, to take such a major step without the consent of the Central Committee. As early as April 1955 the Central Committee gave this warning: "Do not commit the 1953 mistake of mass dissolution of co-operatives again, otherwise self-

critical examination will again be called for." But certain comrades preferred not to listen.

In the face of success, there are, I think, two bad tendencies: one is that "dizziness with success" which makes for swelled-headedness and leads to "Leftist" mistakes. That, of course, is bad. The second is letting oneself be stunned by success, which leads to "drastic compression" and to Rightist mistakes. That is bad, too. At the present time, it is the latter that prevails. Some comrades are stunned by the hundreds of thousands of small co-operatives.

IV

Preparatory work before the co-operatives are set up must be done seriously and well.

Attention must be paid from the very start to the quality of the co-operatives; the tendency simply to increase their number must be opposed.

Fight no battle that is not well prepared, no battle whose outcome is uncertain: that was the well-known slogan of our Party during the past revolutionary wars. It applies equally well to the work of socialist construction. If you want to be sure of the outcome, there must be preparedness, full preparedness. A great deal of spade work must be done beforehand if you are going to set up a group of new agricultural producers' co-operatives in a province, administrative

region or county. The main thing this work includes is (1) criticism of wrong ideas and summarization of experience gained in the work; (2) systematic and repeated publicity among the peasant masses of our Party's principles, policy and measures on agricultural co-operation; and explanation in the course of propaganda among the peasants not only of the benefits of co-operation but also of the difficulties that may be met with in expanding it, so that their minds are fully prepared; (3) taking into account the situation as it really is, drawing up a comprehensive plan for expanding agricultural co-operation for an entire province, administrative region, county, district or *hsiang*, and on the basis of this comprehensive plan working out an annual plan; (4) training cadres for co-operatives in short-term courses; (5) widespread expansion of agricultural producers' mutual-aid teams in large numbers and, whenever possible, getting such teams to join together and form combined groups of mutual-aid teams, so laying the foundations for further combination into co-operatives.

Given these conditions, it is possible, in developing co-operatives, to go a long way towards solving the problem of how to pay attention to both their number and quality. But still, once a group of co-operatives is set up, the work of checking them should be immediately undertaken.

Whether a group of co-operatives can be consolidated after it is established depends, first, on how well the preliminary spade work was done and,

secondly, on how well the work of checking is carried out thereafter.

The work of both setting up and checking over co-operatives depends on the Party and Youth League branches in the *hsiang*. For that reason, both tasks must be closely linked with the work of building up and consolidating Party and Youth League organizations in the countryside.

The local cadres in the rural areas should be the mainstay both in establishing and checking over the co-operatives, and they should be backed up in their work and asked to shoulder responsibility. Cadres sent from above should be an auxiliary force; their function is to guide and help, not to take everything into their own hands.

V

Members of agricultural producers' co-operatives must obtain higher yields than individual peasants and those working in mutual-aid teams. Output certainly cannot be allowed to remain at the level reached by individual peasants or mutual-aid teams: that would mean failure. What would be the use of having co-operatives at all? Still less can yields be allowed to fall. Over 80 per cent of the 650,000 existing agricultural producers' co-operatives did increase their yields. That is a cheerful picture, showing that mem-

bers of the co-operatives are taking greater initiative in production and that co-operatives are superior to mutual-aid teams, and far superior to individual farming.

Certain things are essential in order to increase yields: first, insistence on the principles of voluntariness and mutual benefit; secondly, improvement of management (planning and administration of production, organization of labour, etc.); thirdly, improvement of farming technique (deep ploughing and intensive cultivation, close planting, increasing the acreage of land which is cropped more than once a year, selection of seed, popularization of improved farm implements, the fight against plant diseases and pests, etc.); and fourthly, an increase in the means of production (including land, fertilizer, water conservancy works, draught animals, farm implements, etc.). These are necessary conditions for consolidating the co-operatives and ensuring increased production.

We must, while always insisting on the principles of voluntariness and mutual benefit, now pay attention to the following questions: (1) Is it better to leave the pooling of draught animals and large farm implements in the co-operatives for a year or two? Were fair prices for them agreed, and were repayments spread over too long a time? (2) Is the ratio between the dividend on land shares and payment for labour appropriate? (3) How should the co-operative acquire funds for investment? (4) Can members devote

part of their labour to subsidiary rural production? (Because the agricultural producers' co-operatives we have now set up are generally semi-socialist in nature, attention must be paid to a proper settlement of these four questions, to avoid violating the principle of mutual benefit as between middle and poor peasants. Voluntariness can only be based on mutual benefit.) (5) How much land is it allowable to set aside for members of a co-operative to work on their own? (6) The question of the composition of the co-operative; and so on.

I shall now deal with the question of the composition of the co-operative membership. I think that, in the next year or two, in all areas where co-operatives are starting to grow or have only recently started to get going, that is, in most areas at present, we should first get the active elements of the following sections of the people organized: (1) the poor peasants, (2) the lower new middle peasants and (3) the lower old middle peasants. People in these sections who for the time being are not active must not be dragged in against their will. Wait till their understanding grows and they are interested in co-operatives, then draw them in group by group. These sections of people are fairly close to each other in their economic position. They either still have difficulties (in the case of the poor peasants who have been given land and are much better off than in pre-liberation days but still have difficulties owing to insufficient manpower, draught animals and farm implements), or are still not well

off (in the case of the lower middle peasants). Therefore, they all have an active desire to organize co-operatives. Even so, for various reasons, the degree of their keenness varies: some are very keen, some are, for the time being, not very keen, while others prefer to wait and see. So we should continue to educate for a while those who for the time being are reluctant to join co-operatives, even if they are poor or lower middle peasants, we should continue to educate for a time and wait patiently till their understanding grows; what we must not do is to go against the voluntary principle and drag them in against their will.

As for the upper middle peasants among the new and old middle peasants—that is, the middle peasants who are economically better off—except for those who have already become conscious that they must choose the socialist road and are really willing to join—who can be admitted—none of the rest are to be drawn in for the time being, certainly not dragged in reluctantly. This is because they have not yet become conscious that they must choose the socialist road, and they will make up their minds to join the co-operatives only after the majority of people in the rural areas have joined, or when the yield per *mou* of the co-operatives equals or surpasses that of the land of well-to-do middle peasants, and when they realize that they stand to gain nothing by going on working on their own, and that it is rather more profitable to join.

So the first thing to do is to divide those who are poor or still not well off (together they form about 60 to 70 per cent of the rural population) into groups according to their degree of understanding, and, in the next few years, to get them to organize themselves into co-operatives, and then go on to absorb the well-to-do middle peasants. In this way we can avoid running things just by issuing orders.

In the next few years we shall definitely not, in areas where the majority of the population have not joined in co-operation, take former landlords and rich peasants into the co-operatives. In areas where the majority of people have joined in co-operation, those co-operatives which are firmly established may, on conditions, at different times, take in group by group people who were formerly landlords and rich peasants but who have long given up exploitation, who are now engaged in labour and abide by law, letting them take part in collective labour and continue to reform themselves in the process.

VI

On the question of growth, the problem that calls for criticism at present is not rashness. It is wrong to say that the present pace of development of the agricultural producers' co-operatives has "gone beyond practical possibilities" or "gone beyond the conscious-

ness of the masses." The situation in China is like this: its population is enormous, there is a shortage of cultivated land (only three *mou* of land per head taking the country as a whole; in many parts of the southern provinces the average is only one *mou* or less), natural calamities take place from time to time—every year large numbers of farms suffer more or less from flood, drought, gales, frost, hail or insect pests—and methods of farming are backward. As a result, many peasants are still having difficulties or are not well off. The well-off ones are comparatively few, although since land reform the standard of living of the peasants as a whole has improved to a greater or lesser extent. For all these reasons there is an active desire among most peasants to take the socialist road. Our country's socialist industrialization and its achievements are constantly intensifying it. For them socialism is the only solution. Such peasants amount to 60 to 70 per cent of the entire rural population. That is to say, most of the peasants, if they are to throw off poverty, improve their standard of living and withstand natural calamities, cannot but unite and go forward to socialism. This awareness is already taking an increasing hold on the masses of the poor and not so well-off peasants. The well-to-do or comparatively well-off peasants make up only 20 to 30 per cent of the rural population. They vacillate. Some try hard to take the road to capitalism. As I said before, a good many poor and not so well-off peasants whose level of understanding is low at the moment also

mark time and waver. But compared with the well-to-do peasants, it is easy for them to accept socialism. That is how things stand now.

But some of our comrades ignore these facts and think that the several hundred thousand small semi-socialist agricultural producers' co-operatives that have sprung into being have "gone beyond practical possibilities" or "gone beyond the understanding of the masses." What this means is that all they see is the comparatively small number of well-to-do peasants, and forget about the majority—those who are poor or not well off. This is the first wrong-headed idea.

These comrades also underrate the leading role which the Communist Party plays in the countryside and the whole-hearted support which the peasant masses give it. They imagine our Party is already finding it difficult to consolidate the several hundred thousand small co-operatives, and that any great growth of co-operative farming is certainly inconceivable. They paint a pessimistic picture of the present situation in the Party's work in guiding agricultural co-operation and think that it "has gone beyond the level of the cadres' experience." It's quite true, the socialist revolution is a new revolution. In the past we only had experience of bourgeois-democratic revolution; we had no experience of socialist revolution. How can we get such experience: by sitting back and waiting for it, or by throwing ourselves into the struggle for the socialist revolution and learning in the process? How

else can we get experience in industrialization if we do not carry out the Five-Year Plan, if we do not engage in the work of socialist industrialization? Co-operation in agriculture is one of the integral parts of the Five-Year Plan. If we do not guide the peasants in organizing one or several agricultural producers' co-operatives in every *hsiang* or village, where will the "cadres' experience" come from, how will the level of that experience be raised? Clearly the idea that the present state of development reached by the agricultural producers' co-operatives has "gone beyond the level of the cadres' experience" shows faulty thinking. This is the second wrong-headed idea.

The way these comrades look at things is wrong. They fail to grasp the essential, main aspects and instead exaggerate non-essential, minor aspects. I am not saying that these non-essential, minor aspects should be overlooked: they have to be dealt with properly one by one. But if we are to avoid confusion about the direction in which to proceed, we should not regard them as the essential, main aspects.

We must be convinced: first, that the peasant masses are willing, led by the Party, gradually to follow the socialist road; second, that the Party is able to guide the peasants to take this road. These two points are the essence, the crux of the matter. If we lack this conviction, it is impossible for us to virtually achieve socialism in the period of roughly three five-year plans.

VII

The Soviet Union's great historical experience in building socialism inspires our people and gives them full confidence that they can build socialism in their country. However there are different ways of looking at this question of international experience. Some comrades disapprove of the Party Central Committee's policy of keeping agricultural co-operation in step with socialist industrialization, the policy which proved correct in the Soviet Union. They consider that the prescribed rate of development for industrialization is all right, but that there is no need for agricultural co-operation to keep in step with industrialization, that it should develop very, very slowly. That is to disregard the Soviet Union's experience. These comrades do not understand that socialist industrialization is not something that can be carried out in isolation, separate from agricultural co-operation. In the first place, as everyone knows, the level of production of marketable grain and industrial raw materials in our country today is very low, whereas the state's demands for these items grow year by year. Therein lies a sharp contradiction. If, in a period of roughly three five-year plans, we cannot fundamentally solve the problem of agricultural co-operation, if we cannot jump from small-scale farming with animal-drawn farm implements to large-scale farming with machinery—which includes state-

sponsored land reclamation carried out on a large scale by settlers using machinery (the plan being to bring under cultivation 400-500 million *mou* of virgin land in the course of three five-year plans), we shall fail to resolve the contradiction between the ever-increasing demand for marketable grain and industrial raw materials and the present generally poor yield of staple crops. In that case our socialist industrialization will run into formidable difficulties: we shall not be able to complete socialist industrialization. The Soviet Union once faced this problem in the course of building socialism. It solved it by systematically guiding and expanding agricultural co-operation. We too can solve this problem only by using the same method.

In the second place, some of our comrades do not think of linking up the following two factors: heavy industry which is the most important branch in the work of socialist industrialization and produces the tractors and other agricultural machinery, the chemical fertilizers, modern means of transport, oil, electric power for the needs of agriculture and so on, and the fact that all these can be found a use for or can be used on a big scale only on the basis of large-scale, co-operative farming. We are carrying out a revolution not only in the social system, changing from private ownership to common ownership, but also in technology, changing from handicraft production to mass production with up-to-date machinery. These two revolutions interlink. In agriculture, under the conditions prevailing in our country, co-operation must

precede the use of big machinery. (In capitalist countries agriculture tends to develop along capitalist lines.) We can see, then, that industry and agriculture, socialist industrialization and the socialist transformation of agriculture, cannot on any account be separated, cannot be dealt with in isolation from each other. Moreover, there must be no attempt to over-estimate the one and underrate the other. Soviet experience in this matter, too, shows us the way to go, yet some of our comrades pay no attention and always look at things in isolation, as though they were not connected. What is more, there are two other things which some of our comrades do not think of linking up: the large funds which are needed to complete both national industrialization and the technical reconstruction of agriculture and the fact that a considerable part of these funds is derived from agriculture. Apart from the direct agricultural tax, accumulation of funds comes about by way of developing the production of light industry, which produces large quantities of consumer goods needed by the peasants. The peasants exchange their marketable grain and industrial raw materials for these goods. That satisfies the material demands of both the peasants and the state. It also accumulates funds for the state. But any large-scale expansion of light industry requires the development not only of heavy industry but of agriculture too. The reason for this is that you cannot bring about any great expansion of a light industry founded simply on small-peasant economy; but only

one based on large-scale farming which, in the case of our country, means socialist co-operative agriculture. Only that type of agriculture can give the peasants much greater purchasing power than they have now. We again have the experience of the Soviet Union to draw on, but some of our comrades take no notice of it. They usually take the standpoint of the bourgeoisie and the rich peasants or that of the well-to-do middle peasants who have a spontaneous tendency to take the capitalist road. They think in terms of the few, rather than take the standpoint of the working class and think in terms of the whole country and people.

VIII

Some comrades have found grounds in the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for criticizing what they call impatience and rashness in carrying out agricultural co-operation in our country at present. And does not the *History of the C.P.S.U. (B.) Short Course* tell us that many of their local Party organizations at one time did commit mistakes through impatience and rashness when it came to the question of the pace of co-operation? Should we not pay attention to this Soviet experience?

I think we certainly should pay attention to this Soviet experience. We must oppose any impatience

and rashness, any step taken without preparation and without considering the level of understanding which the peasant masses have reached. What we should not do is to allow some of our comrades to cover up their dilatoriness by quoting the experience of the Soviet Union.

How did the Central Committee of our Party decide to carry out agricultural co-operation in China?

First, it prepared to accomplish the plan, in the main, in eighteen years. The little more than three years between the founding of the People's Republic of China in October 1949 and 1952 were spent in restoring the economy of our country. In this period, in the field of agriculture, besides completing land reform and bringing about the recovery of agricultural production, we made great efforts to promote the organization of agricultural mutual-aid teams and began to organize semi-socialist agricultural producers' co-operatives in all the old liberated areas. In this work some experience was gained. Then there followed the First Five-Year Plan, which began in 1953. It has now been running nearly three years and our agricultural co-operative movement has surged forward all over the country. We have been piling up experience. Eighteen years altogether will pass between the founding of the People's Republic of China and the completion of the Third Five-Year Plan. In this period, simultaneously with the virtual completion of socialist industrialization and socialist transformation of handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce,

we intend, in the main, to complete the socialist transformation of agriculture. Is this possible? Soviet experience tells us that it is. The Civil War in the Soviet Union ended in 1920. Agricultural co-operation was completed in the seventeen years between 1921 and 1937. The greater part of this work was done in the six years between 1929 and 1934. During this period, though some local Party organizations in the Soviet Union, just as the *History of the C.P.S.U. (B.) Short Course* records, made the mistake of getting "dizzy with success," the mistake was quickly rectified. Finally, by a great effort, the Soviet Union successfully completed the socialist transformation of its entire agriculture and at the same time revolutionized agriculture on the technical side. The Soviet Union's experience is our model.

Secondly, we have been taking steps to bring about a gradual advance in the socialist transformation of agriculture. The first step in the countryside is to call on the peasants, in accordance with the principles of voluntariness and mutual benefit, to organize agricultural producers' mutual-aid teams. Such teams contain only the rudiments of socialism. Each one draws in a few households, though some have ten or more. The second step is to call on the peasants, on the basis of these mutual-aid teams and still in accordance with the principles of voluntariness and mutual benefit, to organize small agricultural producers' co-operatives, semi-socialist in nature, characterized by the pooling of land as shares and by

single management. Not until we take the third step will the peasants be called upon, on the basis of these small semi-socialist co-operatives and in accordance with the same principles of voluntariness and mutual benefit, to unite on a larger scale and organize large agricultural producers' co-operatives completely socialist in nature. These steps are designed to steadily raise the socialist consciousness of the peasants through their personal experience, to change their mode of life step by step and so minimize any feeling that their mode of life is being changed all of a sudden. Steps such as these can in the main avoid any drop in yields over a period of, say, the first year or two. More than that, these steps must ensure a year by year increase. And this can be done. Roughly 80 per cent of the existing 650,000 agricultural producers' co-operatives have increased output. Just over 10 per cent of them have shown neither an increase nor a decline. The output of the remainder has dropped. The state of affairs in both these latter categories is bad, and particularly so in the case of co-operatives where production has fallen. A great effort must be made to check over such co-operatives. Since about 80 per cent of all co-operatives increased output (by anything from 10 to 30 per cent), and since just over 10 per cent in their first year showed neither an increase nor a decline, it must be quite possible for them, in their second year, after checking, to show an increase; and, finally, since it is feasible for the remainder that have shown a decline in output to increase it in the

second year, after checking, or at least to reach the stage of neither increasing nor reducing production, our progress in co-operation is on the whole healthy, and can in the main ensure that production does not fall, but rises. The taking of these steps is, moreover, a splendid school for training cadres. Through such steps administrative and technical personnel for the co-operatives are gradually trained in large numbers.

Thirdly, targets for the progress of agricultural co-operation are to be set once a year in the light of actual conditions, and a check on how the work of co-operation is being carried out made several times a year. In this way concrete measures for progress in the various provinces, counties and *hsiang* can be decided on every year according to changing conditions and their degree of success. In some places, progress may be held up for a while pending check over. In others, development and checking can proceed side by side. Part of the membership of some co-operatives may be allowed to withdraw. Individual co-operatives may, for the time being, be allowed to dissolve. In some places large numbers of new co-operatives may be set up, while in others only the number of peasant households in existing co-operatives may be increased. Whenever a number of co-operatives have been established in a province or county, there must be a time when we can stop for a check over before we go on to set up some more. The idea of never allowing any pause, any rest, is all wrong. As for supervising the movement, the Party Central Committee, and its

provincial, area, municipal and autonomous region committees, must pay strict attention to it. Inspection is to be done not once but several times a year. Whenever a problem crops up, it should be solved right away. Problems should not be allowed to pile up till there is a whole batch of them to settle. Criticism should be made in good time; do not get into the habit of criticizing only after something has happened. For instance, in the first seven months of this year, the Central Committee itself has called three conferences of responsible comrades from various places, including the one now going on, to discuss the problems of co-operation in the countryside. This method of working out proper measures, suited to local conditions in different places and giving timely guidance, ensures that we shall commit fewer mistakes in our work and that, if mistakes are committed, they are quickly put right.

In view of what I have said, can we not say that the policy of our Party on the question of agricultural co-operation is the right one, one that can ensure the healthy development of the movement? I think we can and should say so. To characterize this policy as "rash" is utterly wrong.

IX

Some comrades, basing themselves on the viewpoint of the bourgeoisie, rich peasants or well-to-do

middle peasants who have a spontaneous tendency to take the capitalist road, approach the problem of the worker-peasant alliance—a problem of the utmost importance—in the wrong way. They think that the present situation of the co-operative movement is critical. They advise us to “get off the horse” as we are riding along the road to co-operation. “If you don’t,” they warn us, “you’re liable to break up the worker-peasant alliance.” We think exactly the opposite is true. If we don’t keep on our horse, we are liable to break up the worker-peasant alliance. They say “get off!” We say “get on!”—only one word different, but all the difference between one policy and another.

As everybody knows, we already have a worker-peasant alliance based on a bourgeois-democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism, which took land from the landlords and distributed it to the peasants so as to free them from the bondage of feudal ownership. Now this revolution is a thing of the past and feudal ownership has been done away with. What still lingers in the countryside is capitalist ownership by the rich peasants and individual peasant ownership—an ocean of it. Everyone has noticed that in recent years there has been a spontaneous and constant growth of capitalist elements in the countryside and that new rich peasants have sprung up everywhere. Many well-to-do middle peasants are striving to become rich ones. Many poor peasants, lacking

sufficient means of production, are still not free from the toils of poverty; some are in debt, others selling or renting their land. If this tendency goes unchecked, the separation into two extremes in the countryside will get worse day by day. Peasants who have lost their land and who are still having difficulties will complain that we do nothing to save them when we see they are up against it, nothing to help them overcome difficulties. And the well-to-do middle peasants who tend towards capitalism will also find fault with us, for they will never be satisfied because we have no intention of taking the capitalist path. If that is how circumstances stand, can the worker-peasant alliance stand fast? Obviously not. The problem is one that can be solved only on a new basis. That basis is, simultaneously, gradually, to bring about, on the one hand, socialist industrialization, the socialist transformation of handicraft industry and capitalist industry and commerce, and, on the other, the socialist transformation of agriculture as a whole through co-operation. In that way we shall put an end to the systems of rich-peasant economy and individual economy in the countryside and so let all people in the rural areas enjoy a common prosperity. Only in this way, we hold, can the worker-peasant alliance be consolidated. If we fail to act in this way, that alliance will really be in danger of breaking up. The comrades who advise us to "get off the horse" are completely wrong on this score.

X

We should realize, here and now, that an upsurge in socialist transformation will soon come about all over the country's rural areas. That is inevitable. By the end of the last year of the First Five-Year Plan and the beginning of the Second, that is, by the spring of 1958, there will be some 250 million people—about 55 million peasant households (averaging four and a half persons each)—in co-operatives of a semi-socialist type. That will mean half the whole rural population. By that time many counties and some provinces will have virtually completed the semi-socialist transformation of their agricultural economy; and in every part of the country a small number of semi-socialist co-operatives will have turned into fully socialist ones. During the first half of the Second Five-Year Plan (by 1960), we shall, by and large, accomplish this semi-socialist transformation among the remaining half of the rural population. By that time socialist co-operatives transformed from semi-socialist co-operatives will have grown in number.

During the First and Second Five-Year Plans, the main feature of reform in the countryside will still be social reform. Technical reform will take second place. The amount of sizable farm machinery will certainly have increased, but not to any great extent. During the Third Five-Year Plan, social and technical reform will advance side by side in the rural

areas. More and more large farm machinery will be employed year by year. As for social reform, co-operatives after 1960 will gradually change, group by group and at different times from co-operatives of a semi-socialist nature to fully socialist ones. Only when socialist transformation of the social-economic system is complete and when, in the technical field, all branches of production and places wherein work can be done by machinery are using it, will the social and economic appearance of China be radically changed. The economic conditions of our country being what they are, technical reform will take longer than social reform. It is estimated that it will take roughly four or five five-year plans, that is, twenty to twenty-five years, to accomplish, in the main, the technical reform of agriculture on a national scale. The whole Party must work to carry out this great task.

XI

We must make comprehensive plans and give more active leadership.

There must be national, provincial, regional, county, district and *hsiang* plans to carry out co-operation in its separate stages. And as the work proceeds, these plans must be constantly revised in the light of actual conditions.

All Party and Youth League organizations, whether at provincial, regional, county, district or *hsiang*

level, must pay serious attention to rural problems and earnestly work to improve the quality of their leadership in rural work. Leading comrades on local Party and Youth League committees at all levels should study the work of agricultural co-operation as fast as ever they can and make themselves experts. In short, what we have to do is to take the initiative, not remain passive; strengthen our leadership and not let it get slack.

XII

In August 1954 (this is, of course, no longer news), the report of the Heilungkiang Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China said: "With the rise and spread of the tide of rural co-operation, all types of mutual-aid and co-operative organizations and all sections of the people in the rural areas have gone into action to a greater or lesser degree. Existing agricultural producers' co-operatives are planning and preparing to enlarge their membership; agricultural mutual-aid teams which intend to turn themselves into co-operatives are planning and preparing to draw in a larger number of households; the less qualified mutual-aid teams want to grow too and raise themselves to a higher level. Some people are busily preparing to join new co-operatives, others to join existing ones. Those who are not ready to join co-operatives this year are energetically preparing to

join mutual-aid teams. The movement is very broad in its scope: it has become a mass movement. That is a new, striking thing about the great development of agricultural co-operation. But because some leading comrades in certain counties and districts cannot adjust themselves to this new phenomenon and do not give more active leadership when it is called for, in a number of villages and *tun* (the village in Heilungkiang Province is the administrative unit corresponding to the *hsiang* in the provinces south of the Great Wall; the *tun* in Heilungkiang is not an administrative unit, but is equivalent to the village in the provinces south of the Great Wall), when people start looking round for partners, certain unhealthy features have begun to appear. The strong seek out the strong and elbow the weak aside. There is a squabbling about who shall get capable cadres, poaching members and disunity. There is the thoughtless placing of capable cadres in one place. Rich and well-to-do peasants with a fairly strong capitalist outlook seize the chance to set up low-grade mutual-aid teams or 'rich peasants' co-operatives.' All this clearly shows that, with the rapid growth of agricultural co-operation, it is not enough, when thinking how to carry out Party policy and guide the movement, to think merely in terms of setting up new co-operatives. We must take into account the whole village (that is, the whole *hsiang*), and think in terms of the general advance of the agricultural co-operative movement, considering both enlarging old co-operatives and set-

ting up new, both the development of the co-operatives and the improvement of the mutual-aid teams, this year, and next year, and even the year after. Only by so doing can the Party's policy be fully carried out and the agricultural co-operative movement grow healthily."

Is it really true only of Heilungkiang Province that "some leading comrades in certain counties and districts cannot adjust themselves to this new phenomenon and give more active leadership when it is called for"? Does such a state of affairs exist only in some counties and districts? I think it very likely that people of the same type with serious shortcomings, people whose leadership tails behind the movement, can be found in many leading organizations all over the country.

The report of the Heilungkiang Provincial Committee of the Party goes on to say: "Hsichin Village, Shwangcheng County, by combining leadership with the voluntary principle worked out a comprehensive plan for the whole village. This is a completely new way of guiding the big advance in co-operation. Its importance lies primarily in the fact that in working out such a comprehensive plan the Party's class line in the countryside was fully translated into life, the unity between poor and middle peasants strengthened, and a vigorous struggle waged against the rich-peasant tendency. Active cadres were also properly distributed in the interests of agricultural co-operation as a whole. Relations between the various co-

operatives and between the co-operatives and mutual-aid teams were readjusted and strengthened, and thereby the agricultural co-operative movement was systematically carried forward along the whole front. Secondly, such planning set the task of expanding agricultural co-operation on a large scale squarely before the leading bodies at the basic level and before the masses. It brought home to the village branch of the Party how to lead. It showed the old co-operatives how to advance; it taught how new co-operatives should be set up; and it helped the mutual-aid teams see the true direction they had to take if they were to improve. The plan also gave full rein to the initiative and enthusiasm of the village branch of the Party and the masses, and proved in practice that the principle of relying on the Party branch and on the experience and wisdom of the masses was correct. Finally, it is precisely this planning that enabled us to obtain an even deeper knowledge of the situation in the village and enabled all aspects of Party policy to be concretely applied. Therefore, it was possible to avoid both impatience and rashness on the one hand, and conservatism and drifting on the other. As a result, the policy of the Central Committee of the Party—'active leadership, steady advance'—was correctly followed."

How were the "certain unhealthy features" mentioned in the report actually dealt with? The report itself did not provide a direct answer to that question. The report of the Shwangcheng County Committee of

the Party, appended to the Heilungkiang Provincial Committee's report, did. It said: "As a result of carrying out a comprehensive plan based on a combination of leadership by the Party branch and voluntariness on the part of the masses, the unhealthy tendency to bar badly-off peasant households from the co-operatives was put right, the placing of too many capable cadres in one place was stopped, squabbling over capable cadres and new members disappeared, the links between the co-operatives and the mutual-aid teams became closer, attempts by the rich and well-to-do middle peasants to organize rich peasants' co-operatives or low-grade mutual-aid teams failed, and the plans of the Party branch were, by and large, carried into effect. The membership of two older co-operatives has gone up 40 per cent, skeleton organization for six new co-operatives is being set up, and two mutual-aid teams have been checked over. If everything goes well, next year (that is, in 1955) the whole village will be farming co-operatively. At present, the whole village is working energetically to fulfil this year's plan to develop agricultural co-operation, increase production and safeguard the crops. The general opinion among the village cadres is: 'If we had not done all this, everything would be in a mess. There would have been trouble not only this year but next year, too.'"

As I see it, this is the way we ought to do things. Comprehensive planning, more active leadership—that is our policy.

